A black and white photograph of a modern building's entrance. The scene features two large, light-colored columns flanking a dark, recessed doorway. A wide, light-colored staircase leads up to the entrance. The overall atmosphere is minimalist and architectural.

# The Omen

*Your home away  
from home.*

# The Omen

Volume 8, Number 1  
September 13, 1996

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## Policy Box!

The Omen accepts from any member of the Hampshire community. We will not edit anything you write, as long as you are willing to be responsible for what you say. Libel, which we personally find amusing and entertaining for countless hours is just not able to be printed in this forum.

Submissions, which includes just about anything involving the Hampshire community in some way (news, opinions, artwork, etc.), are due on Saturday nights at 8:00 to the editor of the section in which you wish to appear, or to Ben Sanders (E-307, box 710), or Jonathan Land (E-311, box 527). We prefer submissions on disk (IBM or HIGH DENSITY Macintosh), although hard copy (on paper, dumbass) is okay as well. Label your stuff well and it will make it back to you with no problem.

So give us your news, commentary, short fiction, comics, satire, poetry, art, bulletins, questions, and anything else you can think of, and your beloved community rag will dish it back 700 times. What better way to be heard?

**“Like that Jim Jones cult I’ll take you  
out with one punch.**

**-Bloodhound Gang**

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## Mommy, Please Tuck Me In

Hello Young Loathers,

My name is Jonathan Land and I'm here to welcome you to (or back to) Hampshire College, the pure testosterone of the Pioneer Valley. In case if you are unfamiliar with The Omen, we are a weekly publication featuring features, opinion, news, reviews, reviews, opinion, art, opinion, and of course, miscellany. If you are familiar with The Omen, punch the first cripple you see in the face.

Speaking of cripples I attended the recent All-Student Meeting, and I've made a discovery about what Hampshire students truly want: their mommy.

The sole concern of the meeting was to discuss and take action about the firing of two staff members, Theresa Gordon and Bernice Gero, amongst related items. These two women provided a valuable resource for countless individuals and groups of campus. The action that was to take place was the signing of a petition to re-hire those fired in their previous positions.

May it be duly noted that I am going into this matter with no details whatsoever (besides mentioning that nine people in all were either fired, fired and re-hired in other jobs paying less

money, or given much more job responsibility with equal pay, I guess it's okay for the other seven to get fucked over in the eyes of the students at the meeting).

Why am I not going into detail? Because I could give a rat's ass. The thing that struck me most was the level of irrationality and pathetic behavior in that room.

First of all, I'm so annoyed by people who sound like they're crying when they're trying to make their point. If you really know what you're talking about, you don't have to play the emotion card.

Second, as for the approach regarding the petition, it just makes no sense. Hampshire isn't going to hire these people back in the capacity that the students ask. Whether they gave a bullshit reason (i.e. "We have no money.") or not (i.e. "These people were a pain in the ass, and frankly we just didn't like them.") Hampshire students are not familiar with the concept of working with the materials available to them. The plan from here on out should be to fuck the school into creating the proper positions, and getting the right people to fill them.

Hampshire College is a business as well as an educa-

tional facility, whether you like it or not; and like any disgruntled person involved with any business, you have to get the people involved to give you what you feel they owe you, in the most feasible, legal method possible.

Finally, the thing that pissed me off the most was how people claimed that their student group or mental health or whatever were in serious jeopardy because of the firing of these people. My immediate first thought was: Wow, these people don't have the competence to organize themselves and carry on the best they can? What a bunch of apathetic wastes! Just because you don't have a staff member holding your quivering, sweaty hand, that doesn't mean that you can't perform whatever function you have to in their absence.

Anyway, I'm never going to an All-Student meeting again because, frankly a large amount of my peers are blithering loads. May you be here for ten years and concentrate in OPRA.

**Welcome back,  
Jonathan Land  
Managing Editor  
The Omen**







## Sheik Yerbouti!!!

On Thursday, September 26 in Mount Holyoke College's New York Room on the second floor of the Mary Woolley Hall, the public is welcome to attend a free talk by the honorable Hafiz Pasheav, Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the United States. The event begins at 7:30 pm. Mary Woolley is located on Rt. 116 at the south end of campus. Parking is available.

The evening's discussion

is "Oil, People and Politics in the Republic of Azerbaijan" and will provide insight into this small country's geopolitical importance. Azerbaijan's oil reserves in the Caspian Sea are second only to those in the Persian Gulf, making the country's strategic, economic and political future of great interest to the West. Azerbaijan is already at the center of attention of US oil compa-

nies such as Exxon, Penzoil and Chevron, according to Mount Holyoke professor Stephen Jones, who is a leading national expert in the area.

This is the third in a series of annual lectures given at Mount Holyoke by ambassadors from newly-emerged post-Soviet states. In years past, the ambassador from Georgia and Armenia have spoken at the College.

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## These Are The Days

The Berkshire Theatre Festival is announcing the presentation of Kinks leader Ray Davies in his one-man show, *An Evening With Ray Davies: Twentieth Century Man*. Chronicling his life in song and spoken word, Davies bases his show on his recent autobiography "X-Ray". Heralded as "one of pop's greatest songwriters" by The New York Times, and "a great storyteller" by The New York Post, Davies show, which has played in NYC, Chicago, LA, and VH1, plays in Stockbridge before stops in Boston, Philadelphia, Seattle

and Vancouver.

Ray Davies founded The Kinks in London in 1963. The band's string of top ten international hits began with "You Really Got Me" followed by "All Day and All of the Night," "Set Me Free," "I See My Friend," "Till the End of the Day," "A Well Respected Man," "Tired of Waiting," "Lola," "Sunny Afternoon," "Dedicated Follower of Fashion," "Apeman," and "Come Dancing" among many others. Davies also composed several rock operas including *Arthur*, *The Kinks are the Village*

*Green Preservation Society*, and *Soap Opera*. Davies' songs also became hits for other bands including The Jam, Van Halen, and The Pretenders. Affectionately referred to as the Godfather of Brit Pop, Ray Davies is cited as a major influence on the current work of 90s bands like Blur, Pulp, and The Boo Radleys.

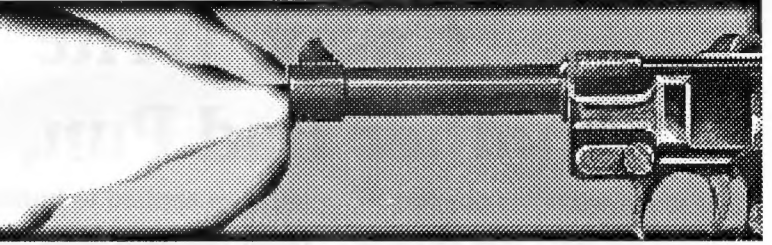
He will be performing September 25-29, 1996 at 7:30 pm at the Berkshire Theatre Festival Mainstage, with ticket prices ranging from 25 to 35 dollars. Call (413) 298-5576 for more information.



*Lying Uncomfortably,*  
Jonathan Land  
1996



# SECTION HATE



## The Cunning Linguist

*Morphology:*  
"Welcome Back"

For all the incoming students, welcome to Hampshire. And for all those returning, welcome back. The former have missed my previous track record, leaving me free to start anew with them. However the latter group know my track record: I got the most number of (angry) responses to a singular article in Omen history, just a week before Josh Bassard was begging for people to respond to his column. And so, knowing that I couldn't get any lower, I've decided to retire from whining apathetically and offending people purposely, and just start writing about something that no one cares enough about to start a riot over: Linguistics.

I've decided to concentrate in that area here at Hampshire, and since I may make this Omen article writing business my Div II community service requirement, I figure it might as well hook into my concentration somehow. So those of you looking for a plethora of curses or yurt bashing remarks can just skip over my column every week, but those of you who are at least slightly interested in word origin, sentence structure, the histories

and influences of different languages on world history and vice versa, may find something slightly worth while in this column (at least I hope).

And since I'm welcoming you returning kids back, I figure this week I'll talk for a while about the word "back."

The word back is a noun, adjective, verb, adverb, and prefix, having, in all of its forms, seven pages of the Oxford English Dictionary devoted to it (from whence all quotes herein come). You can go look it up yourself to see how much the word has come into use (back-lighting, backlash, back-breaking, back-porch, etc.). But what I'd like to examine is the concept of "back" and what it has come to represent from the anthropocentric viewpoint.

The noun back has come to mean "the convex surface of the body of man and vertebrated animals which is adjacent to the spinal axis, and opposite to the belly and most of the special organs." I find it interesting that it is termed opposite of the "special organs," because psychologically, most of us don't represent our backs in our body image. If asked to draw a profile of themselves, most people will either leave out the back or simply draw

and inaccurate straight line to represent it. This is partially because it is something that is difficult for us to see on our own bodies, but also perhaps because of its location, as stated, opposite of the important organs.

However the term back, to refer to other physical locations and concepts, has been unreversably linked to our conception of our own backs. For instance, when talking of "the back of the room" one is referring to anything behind the observer; that is to say anything behind their back. But there is also another interpretation of the phrase "at the back of the room" which personifies the room with a front and back, somewhat arbitrarily. In one's dorm room, the side facing the hall could be the front, and you could stand in the room facing the "back of the room", even though it's not at your back.

In reference to time, the word back almost always refers to the past, placing humans facing forward on a linear time-line, with their backs to the past (even though a lot of people I know definitely have their backs turned to the future.) In Congo, Michael Crichton's talking ape, Amy, gives an interestingly different

*Continued on the next page.*

# Hey Casey, Write Another Bad Pun,

*Continued from the previous page.*

view on the same idea. In speaking on time, she is inclined to put the future behind her, because it is what she cannot see, and the past is in front of her, because she can see it through memories.

This idea of an animal's concept of the word back intrigues me. Especially considering the fact that most of the earth's animal population have their "backs" facing upward, not backwards. The back of animals is defined as "the upper surface opposite to that on which they walk, crawl, or rest." If Natural Human Language were not a specifically human thing, perhaps most quadrupedal animals' conceptions of back would be somewhat more akin to the word "up" and not "back." Even on some animals, eye placement would serve a role in this assignment of meanings. For instance, if a certain fish had its eyes placed on the sides of its head, its conception of back would be totally different from both the human conception and a mammalian quadruped's conception. In the case of the human or mammal, back would at least apply to what was behind the visual plane, while in the fish's case this would not be true.

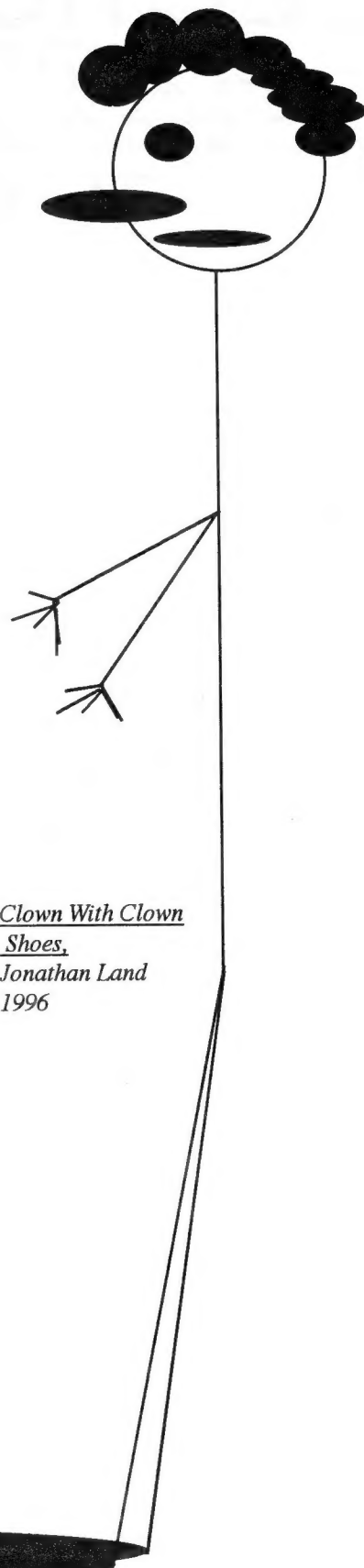
In other cases the word

back, as applied to humans, can mean just their back (i.e. from neck to butt), or the whole back side (from head to toe), or the part of the body which bears burdens from hard labor (as in "this is back-breaking work!"), or even as a reference to where clothes are fundamentally worn ("I'll give you the shirt off my back.").

Most uses of the word back do derive from the actual human back, as in to back someone (to be a supporter of [to be at their back in case they need help]), to back up (to move, either physically, emotionally, temporally, or metaphysically in the direction one's back is facing), or even as to call anything which resembles a back just that (as in "I know this place like the back of my hand.") So one can see that the word is strongly rooted in our or physical construction as humans, albeit that fact being innate knowledge sometimes.

So as I welcome you back to your school for another year, I am welcoming you to return to the place that you had your back facing, as you walked away from it last semester.

by:  
**Casey Nordell F95**  
**Omen Linguistic Editor**



Clown With Clown  
Shoes.  
Jonathan Land  
1996

# Hey, What's This Hampshire Thing?

Falling in the mists.

So you arrive and there are 300 faces just as new as yours. Over 300 people you've probably never met/encountered/glanced or chanced to walk by in your life until this moment. Waiting in the line of white packets of yet more paper you possibly think (this could be good).

So you head off on a trip, get your stuff together and have some fun (hopefully, who knows, maybe you had a rotten time and hated the whole thing and bonded with this one other person who thought the rest of the group was stupid). You made a connection or two, one way or another.

You go to classes, meet people on your hall, hang out with some newly acquainted friends and try to get into Hampshire's way of being (whatever that is). You settle in and try to do the best you can.

One day, your sitting in your room, writing for a paper and thinking, what the hell am I doing? I've gone to school for how long now? A week, a year, four semesters, nine semesters. What am I doing here? What is my purpose? Why am I spending so much money and only getting so much paper from the college to poster my room and my house and the whole campus if I so desired for the next four years? And then... Out of the blue... After you have asked this life altering question you realize...

There is no perfect answer

and you may be asking yourself that question for the rest of your life. The question isn't even the point or part of the reason I'm writing this article/editorial/rant. I just want to blow off some steam and get a bit in the Omen. So what is the point of it all? I don't know. Ask Abby or some other self-righteous person who thinks they have all the answers. I just have a bunch of questions. Which brings me to the actual reason I'm writing all this tangent-filled, zero MSG, no calories unless you eat the paper, piece of writing.

Where are all the questions? Chris K. at an EPEC meeting proposed a course called "To know is not enough and not to know is not enough".

The point of the course being a bunch of people get together and talk about something that interested them and the research they did on it. (i.e. I was sitting in front of my computer typing up a story and wondered, where does my computer come from? How is it made? What is it's main function?) What do I do with those questions? I get off my butt and start answering them. I call the manufacturer. I call the computer lab, I get answers to the things that interest me and hopefully I come out with a lot of answers and a lot more questions. Now, don't check me on the grammar of this piece or anything (because I could care less at the moment) but I think the main point is...

I think people (a lot of them) come to Hampshire because they have questions, desires, a want or need to explore their thoughts and knowledge to hopefully expand their understanding and to gain a better grasp of how to deal with the questions that may come to them later in life. I've seen a lot of inspired, intelligent, and talented people come through Hampshire with the burning questions and slowly get discouraged in themselves and their work. They lose interest in the questions and take the answers from anyone willing to give them out. I think it's important to keep asking questions. Find out as much as you can about the people/things/and world that is around you. When you feel blocked, find a way around it. I think you'll find that Hampshire has a way of negotiating anything if you're persistent enough.

So after all this ranting and basic sentence structure BS what have I achieved in this short strip of words and blank page filler? Are there more questions to be answered? Do most of you think this is just a bunch of garbage and if so, why? I think my point has been made and I'm kind of tired so I'm just going to send this off to the person in charge, and just forget about it for now. I've got a few questions that need to be answered and I'm tired of looking at this Made in Taiwan monitor.

**Deacon Wardlow**



# Summer Movie Bonanza!!!

As anyone who went to the multiplex this summer knows, this was another lousy summer for movies. ["Wow," you think, "the very first issue of this year's *Omen* is just like every other issue of the *Omen* ever published: a negative whine fest!" ...well, yes. What, you thought maybe Jon gave up control of the paper over the summer? No way. He's going to control this thing, like that NRA bumper sticker in *Red Dawn* says, until they tear it from his cold dead fingers. (My first film reference is to *Red Dawn*!? I think that shows the level of discourse this article is working on. Still, be glad you're not reading "Thoughts Past Midnight"; this could be about doing LSD while reading a copy of *The Music of Chance* at Six Flags Over New Jersey.)]

Okay, second paragraph and I still haven't mentioned the offending material. Here goes:

I saw, I believe, close to one hundred and fifty movies this summer, most of those in theaters. I'm not kidding. I saw everything from *North by Northwest* to *Independence Day*, from *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* to *Breathless* to *The Eliminator* (Don't look for that one; it's a \$12,000 Northern Irish zombie movie.). And here's the news: that cropduster flying toward Carey Grant's head in *North by Northwest* may be the most exciting thing to come out of Hollywood this summer, except that it came out of Hollywood thirty-

seven summers ago. It was more exciting than the *whole earth* being destroyed in *Independence Day*! (A note here: A good friend of mine who is German apologized to me for Roland Emerich, the hack director who gave us that particular opus and happens to have been born in Germany. From my friend, who I assume was speaking on behalf of all Germans, I pass the apology along to all America.)

Anyway, *ID4* is almost too easy a topic. It's an incredibly didactic display of plagiarism and bizarre, patriarchal, chest-thumping pro-Americanism, but it really deserves its own article(s). I'm really writing about the recent failure of "blockbuster" movies to be anything excepting lots of explosions. (I know you've heard this one before, but bear with me.)

The action genre actually *does* have the potential to be about something more than the action, just as westerns and sci-fi movies do. (What was *The Searchers* but a meditation on racism in America?) Generally, a few really good action movies each year will find their way through some crack in the studio system and become the kinds of movies from which viewers can get something to think about. Michael Mann's *Heat* is a good example: He manages to create a three-hour meditation on family, society, technology, and existentialism, almost as if Michaelangelo Antonioni were directing an episode of *Miami*

*Vice*.

Beyond that, what sticks out about *Heat* in my mind is the almost complete absence of big, noisy explosions. Yet the action sequences were meticulously, thrillingly well done. I would easily let go of my desire to have an action movie to think about if I could at least get an action movie to be excited *during*, but that didn't happen this summer either.

*Mission Impossible*, under the meticulous, Hitchcockesque direction of Brian DePalma, had a couple of nicely put-together suspense sequences. Maybe those (plus the presence of Vanessa Redgrave) made it worth watching, but I've seen student films with nicely put-together suspense sequences, and those at least had plots! Whoever edited that movie is a genius. The team that wrote it, however, was just too damn big. Plus, Tom Cruise is a Scientologist. Enough said.

*The Rock*: Now here's where my pseudo-Catholic guilt kicks in. Don Simpson was a mean, ruthless producer of almost uniformly horrible movies. He is, however, dead, so I shouldn't say bad things about him, nor should I think that filmmaking on the whole will benefit from his death. With that in mind, let me just say that *The Rock*, Simpson's final film, is the ultimate Don Simpson movie. It has the car chase from *Days of Thunder* (a Humvee verses a

*Continued on Page 10.*





## Aren't We All Guided By Voices?

It seems as if every college music section's first column of the fall begins the semester with a brief description of the concerts that the writer has seen over the course of the summer. Unfortunately, my summer was inordinately long and boring, and I only saw two shows. I suppose, at the time, I may have thought that I had better things to do, although what those things were I cannot possibly imagine. My time this summer was divided into, primarily, watering the plants and walking the few feet outside my front door to get the mail.

I did, however, get to see Guided By Voices play at the Irving Plaza in New York City. Tickets were \$12, and the (first) opening band was a rather scary combination of 1980's glam rock and vampire burlesque. The lead singer was decked out in a spandex sequin suit of forest green, and since the music was not terribly engaging, I spent the whole time wondering if the lead singer's gigantic, metal frame bat wings would suddenly propel him into the audience (thereby spilling my drink). The second opening band, Railroad Jerk, was less dressed up and had a rowdy, bluegrass feel to their music. Finally, the lead singer of Guided By Voices, who was by now suf-

ficiently drunk to be allowed on stage, appeared. The thing that amazes me about this band is the age and place of life of many of the band members (Robert Pollard, the lead singer is in his forties, teaches elementary school and has a wife and kids.), who have been playing their unique blend of fragmentary, garage brand rock for over a decade. Pollard's drunken stage antics were a source of never ending interest for me. They were actually cute- he sticks his lips out and does aerobics and clumsily twirls the mike around when not singing. It was like he was trying to make fun of the typical male classic rock star, but didn't quite get it right. Rather charming, really. The music was incredible, mostly from albums earlier than Bee Thousand in the beginning, all sounded driven and highly energetic, Pollard's voice full of melodic personality. Best of all, they came out for *five* encores! I'd like to be that energetic when I'm that old. In fact, I'd like to be that energetic right now.

And for my other show, which deals with another old fogey named Robert. As Cure fans depressingly realize, Robert Smith isn't getting any younger (or thinner). His music however, it seems to me, is getting more

pop sounding and sweet flavored with each new album. His last album, most recently released *Wild Mood Swings*, is so... *happy*. I wondered if all the dark stuff from *Seventeen Seconds* and *Pornography* has permanently disappeared in a haze of synth-pop. They are still a reliably creative band to see live, and of course, the fact that this might be the last tour (which I actually later heard, it is not) convinced me to spend the \$30 for a floor seat. It was at the Meadowlands, just a few exits up from my town, and needless to say I hate huge, impersonal amphitheatres. It's just a shame not to see all the faces of the people who are at the show with you. Oh well. I really don't have much to say about the show, except that they played lots of new stuff, graced us with many interesting visual effects, and there wasn't much room to dance. Hearing the Cure at a club is much more fulfilling. Smith came out wearing a New Jersey Devils hockey jersey, which was very cute, and asked the audience, in his thick British accent, if we liked it. Surprisingly enough with all the varied dress styles of the members of the audience, everyone agreed that it was very nice indeed.

*Continued on the next page.*

## Voices End

*Continued from the previous page.*

Well, this article is degenerating and so am I, so I will leave off here, until next week, when I review a restaurant or a show or a movie or something. I think Sebadoh is playing at Pleasant St., sometime soon, so I'll look into that. As for now, my plants are badly in need of attention (I talk to them, mostly). Pleasant Regards, Amber.

**Amber Cortes**

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## Movies End

*Continued from Page 8.*

Ferrari!?), the jet planes from *Top Gun*, the gay-bashing from *Beverly Hills Cop (I, II & III)* and the stupidity from all of the above. Was Don Simpson's death a bad thing? You be the judge.

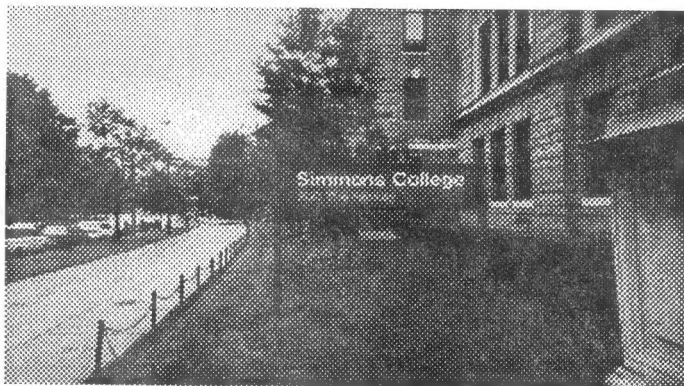
So that's the tirade. As with most other times of the year, summer is a good time to avoid Hollywood product and stick to the fringes, where you can still see movies like *Trainspotting*, *Lone Star*, *Welcome to the Dollhouse*, and *Walking and Talking*. I was really pulling for the boys to come out with *something* decent, though. Maybe next summer.

[Next week (yeah, right): Kramer's Summer Heartbreakers OR: Dammit, Why Wasn't *Dead Man* a Good Movie?]

**Kramer C. O'Neill**

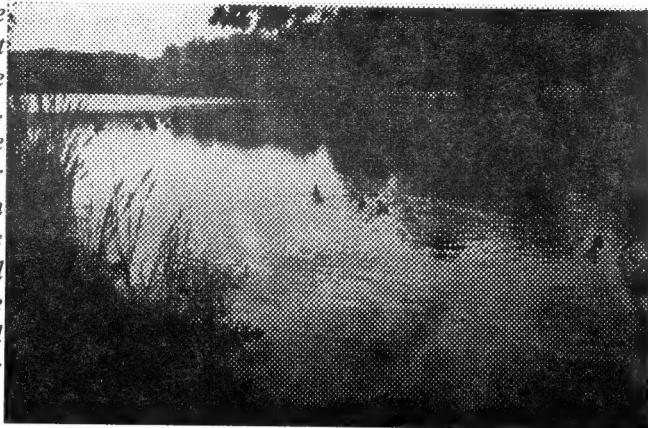
## My Summer Vacation

**By Jonathan Land**

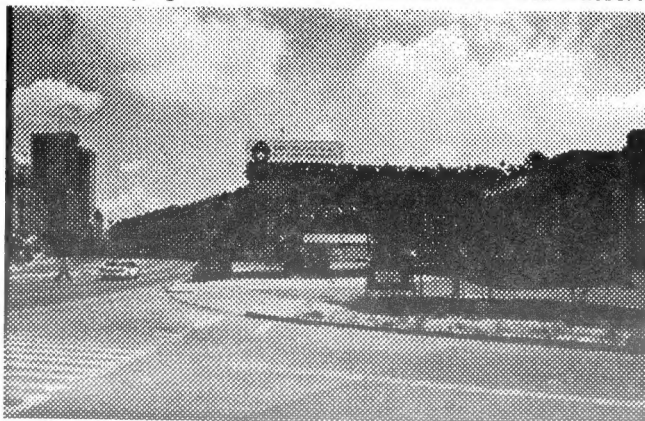


*This is one of the places I worked: Simmons College. Can you believe they let me teach math to high school kids? Simmons has an all-female undergraduate program and the admissions tours featured the youngest looking college-bound girls I've ever seen. Child pornographers, please take note.*

*These are the wittle duckie-poops that lived across the street from me. Whenever Some Chick In Worcester and I walked down there, the ducks always came and sat with us. We didn't even feed them. I'm Doctor Friggin' Doolittle.*



*This is the Texaco station I walked through everyday to catch the T. Right behind it are the greasiest pizzeria ever, and a lackluster liquor store. I bought something called "Muhammed Ali BBQ Potato Chips" in a sissy-pink bag. The cashier yelled at me for buying them because "Muhammed Ali was a deserter from the army". I*



*apologized, and I told him that they were the only barbecue potato chips in the store. He then let me buy them. Lord have mercy on my eternal soul. I like Boston. It's the perfect cross between Amherst and New York City.*